

EXHIBIT # 6

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Music Executive Recounts Day of Altercation With Rapper Combs

By **CHUCK PHILIPS**

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TIMES STAFF WRITER

“He punched me in the face, and then he grabbed the phone and bashed me in the head with it,” said Interscope Records executive Steve Stoute, describing the afternoon last month when he says rap tycoon Sean “Puff Daddy” Combs burst into his office with two accomplices and attacked him.

“One minute I’m in the middle of a meeting,” he told The Times in his first interview since the



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when he says rap tycoon Sean “Puff Daddy” Combs burst into his office with two accomplices and attacked him.

“One minute I’m in the middle of a meeting,” he told The Times in his first interview since the alleged assault, “and the next minute I’m down on the floor and Puffy and his guys are kicking and pounding me. One of them picks up a chair and throws it at me. Then Puffy throws my desk over and they just walk out like nothing happened.”

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Combs, a 29-year-old multimillionaire rap star and chairman of Bertelsmann’s thriving Bad Boy



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Combs, a 29-year-old multimillionaire rap star and chairman of Bertelsmann's thriving Bad Boy Entertainment unit, was arrested April 16 on felony charges that he and two of his bodyguards assaulted Stoute during business hours at the New York office of Seagram Co.'s Universal Music Group.

The unprecedented incident involving executives of rival music companies, sparked by a dispute over a music video in which Combs appears, is under investigation by New York police. At least one of Combs' alleged accomplices is still at large, and a hearing on the matter is scheduled for June 24. Combs, who is free on \$15,000 bail, could be sent to prison for seven years if convicted.

Combs and officials of Bad Boy, which generated nearly \$130 million last year for Munich, Germany-based Bertelsmann, declined to discuss the altercation.



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Stoute, who has been provided with 24-hour security by Seagram, said he is prepared to testify before a grand jury in New York, which is expected to convene within weeks.

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“If this kind of behavior is allowed to go unpenalized, it’ll be like an invitation for extortion in the music business,” Stoute said. “If somebody can get away with walking into the headquarters of the world’s biggest record company and beating up a senior executive over a disagreement, I guarantee you this is going to be a great business for criminals to thrive in.”

Stoute, president of black music at Seagram-owned Interscope Records, is one of the most senior-ranking African American executives in the record industry. Since breaking into the business as a road manager in 1990, the Manhattan native has managed and built the careers of such stars as Nas, Foxy Brown and the TrackMasters, a top production team whose recordings have sold more than 20 million albums in the last five years.

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The 28-year-old executive joined Interscope last year after a brief stint at Sony Corp.'s music group, at which sources say he had a falling-out with executives over his dealings with Interscope and conflicts regarding his duties as manager of Sony rapper Nas. Stoute still acts as a consultant to Nas.

In fact, the actions leading up to the April 15 altercation with Combs were sparked by a dispute over Nas' latest music video, "Hate Me Now," in which Combs had a cameo appearance. Shortly before the video was set to air, Combs had second thoughts about a scene he helped conceive in which he posed crucified to a cross, wearing a crown of thorns. Sony spent an additional \$14,000 on the video to accommodate Combs' request to be included in the scene, sources said.

Combs had already approved an edit of the video, which included a verbal disclaimer added to address his concerns regarding the crucifixion scene. But after consulting with his mother and



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Columbia Records, the Sony-owned label that releases Nas' music, delivered the video to MTV about 1 p.m. April 15. About an hour later, Combs' pastor, Hezekiah Walker, contacted Stoute and expressed his concerns about blasphemous imagery involving Combs in the video. Walker told The Times that he hung up the phone believing that the cuts would be made. Stoute said he had no authorization to make such a promise.

The video aired at 4:20 p.m. that day with the crucifixion scene intact. Sources close to Combs said Thursday that Stoute and Columbia purposely aired the video to create a controversy--a claim that both parties adamantly deny. Stoute and Columbia contend that they were waiting for further instructions from Combs and other officials at Bad Boy but never

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As the video was rolling on MTV, Stoute said, he got an irate call from Combs.

“He just screamed into the phone and hung up,” Stoute said. The phone rang again, and when Stoute answered it, a senior executive at Bad Boy told him that Combs was on his way over and that “he was angry,” Stoute said.

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About 10 minutes later, a security camera videotaped Combs entering the sixth floor of Universal's headquarters with several accomplices, sources said. Stoute said Combs walked up to his desk and--without saying a word--punched him in the face. Stoute said Combs then beat him to the ground with a telephone in front of two of Stoute's associates.

Combs' alleged accomplices then joined in, Stoute said, and repeatedly kicked him and pummeled him with a chair and their fists. According to Stoute, a third bodyguard blocked the exit as Combs overturned his desk and his accomplices trashed his office.

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accomplices trashed his office.

“I was laying there on the floor bleeding,” said Stoute, who was taken to a hospital for treatment of his injuries after the police interviewed him.

“My jaw and my head were all swollen. I couldn’t move my arm. It was a traumatic experience, and in the middle of it, I didn’t know exactly how to feel. I was upset. Embarrassed. Scared. Angry. As far as I’m concerned, this was an attempt on my life. The only reason I’m not dead is because they missed.”

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Sources close to Combs denied the attack, suggesting that Stoute’s injuries were the result

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Sources close to Combs denied the attack, suggesting that Stoute's injuries were the result of a fistfight between Stoute and Combs--an allegation not contained in the police report. One source close to Combs said Stoute is only pressing criminal charges because he hopes to file a civil suit that could lead to a lucrative payoff. Stoute said he is considering a suit but denies any financial motivation.

Combs turned himself in April 16 and was arrested on charges of felony assault and freed on \$15,000 bail. Bad Boy bodyguard Paul Offard turned himself in two weeks later. The third suspect, who sources say goes by the street name D-Mack, is still at large.

A senior executive at Seagram said Thursday that the corporation stands firmly behind Stoute and will support him as he prepares to testify before the grand jury. Sources said Seagram is also weighing the possibility of suing Combs and Bertelsmann Music Group, primarily to send a message to others that it will not tolerate anyone

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“After the beating, my family urged me to get out of the music business, and I considered it,” Stoute said. “But the company has been very supportive of me and made me feel comfortable so that I can continue. I still have second thoughts though about how I move around. I’m still concerned about going back to the office. I’m still scared.”

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